

SUMMARY

The excavations at the blacksmith-cooper shop at Clear Run revealed three separate activity areas within the site. It was also determined that the layout of the shop was not unique. The major areas of activity defined during the excavations were the forge area, the structure area, and the area surrounding the structure. The presence of these three defined areas of activity is fairly typical for a blacksmith shop. It is expected that there would be a forge, a structure, and an area outside the structure where refuse would be deposited. There was no evidence for any other structures on the site.

The blacksmith-cooper shop at Clear Run dates to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was not an antebellum shop that was run by slaves. It is not known how many people were employed at the shop at any given time. Documentary research did not reveal who the smithy was or if he had any apprentices.

The structure or shop was situated on a raised earth platform that measured approximately 35 x 40 feet. It is unclear whether this platform was constructed prior to the building of the shop or if it is merely a result of the debris buildup associated with the shop. Erosion and/or sediment deposition may also play roles, as the site sits on the Black River floodplain. The floored section of the structure measured 15 x 15 feet. Archaeological evidence suggested that the floor of the shop had two periods of construction. This evidence, along with the water-laid layers of sand present throughout the site, indicates that the site was frequently flooded and the shop was rebuilt. This suggests that there was minimal financial investment in the actual structure. The forge appears to have been in a dirt-floored area. However, there was probably a surrounding walled structure that may have been open to the back. This conclusion is based on three pieces of evidence. First, the western edge of Feature 11, a refuse dump, was aligned exactly where a wall would have extended out from the floored area. Second, an unexcavated post was present along the western edge of Feature 11, which may represent a support post for the structure, and third, this layout is similar to other blacksmith shop layouts in the southeast.

The types of artifacts recovered during the excavation of the shop indicated that the shop was used primarily to repair farm equipment. There is nothing to suggest that the shop produced goods for commercial use. It appears that the blacksmith at Clear Run was a jack-of-all-trades for the plantation, and was probably not a specialist. The types of metal artifacts recovered suggest that the blacksmith concentrated mostly on the upkeep of farm machinery and wagons. It is probable that the blacksmith would also have repaired or forged what was necessary at any given time but, on a day-to-day basis, was more concerned with the upkeep of the Clear Run plantation and its equipment.